NORTH RALEIGH CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

College Guidance Handbook

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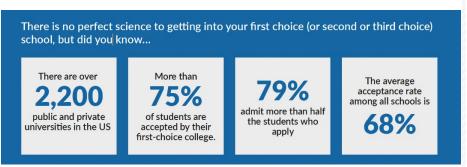
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SENIORS,

Do you sometimes feel uncertain, lost, and confused as you consider your future path in life? Guess what? You are NORMAL! As you navigate your journey through the remainder of your time in high school, I am here if you have needs or questions. I do not have all the answers, but I hope to provide advice, encouragement, and insight that will enable you to make wise decisions.

REMEMBER...

- You are in the driver's seat! Be proactive. Research, know yourself, and be an informed consumer.
- Read your emails carefully.
- Schedule a time for us to meet and tell me about yourself. The more I know about you, the better I can advocate for you.
- Meet deadlines!
- Take advantage of the tools that are offered to help you make informed decisions.
- Avoid social pressures. Make decisions through prayer and conversation with your family.
- Do not allow the college application process to affect your self-esteem.
- Work to build GRIT while you are in high school. Grit will carry you through college and through life!
- Remember life balance! While junior and senior year can be stressful and exhausting at times, these years can also be some of the best years of your life. Savor each day, each moment and use this time to draw closer

There is no perfect science to getting into your first choice (or second or third choice) school, but did you know...

There are over **2,200** public and private universities in the US

More than **75%** of students are accepted by their first-choice college.

79% admit more than half the students who apply

The average acceptance rate among all schools is **68%**

to God, your family, and your friends. Don't let the busyness of life keep you from those you love. Stay prayerful, focused, organized, and purposeful as you plan for the coming years, but do not allow the joys of today to be lost in the process.
- Pray daily for the Lord to show you His perfect plans.
- Never let a "no" be your "no"! Understand that there is more than one road to get to your destination!
- If you do not know what you want to do after high school, or your grades are not the highest--do not be discouraged or compare yourself to others. You are normal!! You can be successful by any definition of the word.

Mrs. Susan Etheridge

What can you be doing in summer before senior year?

1. Check and update your SCOIR account:
   - Be sure your LEGAL name (same as driver's license, birth certificate, etc.) is used
   - Verify your birthdate is correct
   - Add a personal email address. It is best to make your personal email address primary.
   - Sign the FERPA Waiver and Release documents. You will need to waive your right to view letters of recommendation. This allows colleges to know you did not handle or modify them and it gives recommenders freedom to write without worry.
   - Check your GPAs for accuracy. You will receive a paper copy of your transcript at Senior night on Aug. 22. Be sure the GPAs match. DO NOT delete test scores. Colleges cannot see them.
2. Visit colleges, connect with representatives, and make your list.
3. Create a Common App account and read through the website: Apply to college with Common App | Your future starts here
4. Create a spreadsheet of requirements and deadlines: Keep track of application deadlines, number of required recommendation letters, scholarship deadlines, portfolio requirements, etc., all in one organized spot.
5. Consider if you will schedule additional ACT or SAT tests and work to improve your scores. Also, think about whether you will submit test scores. Don't forget--some schools don't require it for admission but may for scholarship consideration.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW AS YOU BEGIN SENIOR YEAR

1. DO NOT use your school email address on ANYTHING related to applying to college. If you do, you could miss out on acceptances and scholarships because you cannot receive email from outside sources. Set up an email address just for college applications and share the password with your parents. That way, it is less likely you will miss anything important. You will get a TON of email!
2. I send all transcripts, letters of recommendation, school reports, FERPA waivers, and our school profile to each college where you apply through SCOIR. How do I know where to send them? **You will move the college to Applied in SCOIR after you submit the application to the college.** For those who have already applied, I will begin sending the documents after drop/add. Your transcript will show your senior class schedule.
3. When you are filling out the Common App, do not put any email addresses in the recommender section. That lets Common App know that I will send the documents another way.
4. After you apply, check your email regularly for further instructions. Read and follow carefully!
5. After I send documents, it can take weeks for colleges to update your portal. If SCOIR shows that things have been sent, don't fear…they are there. The college may continue to tell you they don't have your transcript, but they do.
6. Please feel free to email me, message me through SCOIR, or set up a meeting (starting the last week of August). I am happy to help you with anything you may need.

NRCA COLLEGE APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Use this so you don't miss any steps pertaining to college admissions!

- ❑ Determine your criteria—location, majors, size of school, finances, etc.

- ❑ Search for colleges that meet your criteria and follow those colleges in SCOIR.

- ❑ Visit (in person or virtually) any schools you can possibly visit.

- ❑ Take notes and compare. Start a spreadsheet.

- ❑ Note application deadlines and requirements. Especially note deadlines for Early Action applications as well as scholarship deadline.

- ❑ Narrow the list to about 4-8 schools that you know you would attend if given an offer.

- ❑ If you will apply to any NC public universities, submit your [NC Residency Determination](#). **This should be completed before applying to NC colleges.**

- ❑ Create an account on commonapp.org or your chosen site (see page 9 of this handbook) and begin adding colleges and working on applications. Common App opens August 1. An account can be created before that date, but any college specific information entered can be lost, so only enter "common" information prior to August 1.

- ❑ Move schools to which you are applying to the "applying" column on your My Colleges page in SCOIR.

- ❑ Request 1-2 letters of recommendation from teachers following the required process.

- ❑ Complete the counselor survey posted in SCOIR during the summer for a counselor recommendation.

- ❑ Write and edit your personal essay and supplemental essays. Ask several people to read and edit them.

- ❑ Complete the FAFSA and/or the CSS/Financial Aid Profile, an online application used by certain colleges and scholarships to determine eligibility for aid. CFNC provides excellent guidance: [How to Apply for Financial Aid When Heading to College (cfnc.org).](#)

- ❑ Submit your applications before the deadline. Please note: Once you submit, you cannot revise, so check carefully.

- ❑ **Very important: Immediately after submitting each application, move the college to the Applied column on your My Colleges page in SCOIR. Doing so notifies Mrs. Etheridge to send your school materials to the college.**

- ❑ After you apply, you should get an email from the college with instructions. Usually, they will have you set up a portal, which will show important next steps and deadlines.

- ❑ You can check the status of your documents being sent in SCOIR. Do not be alarmed if your college's portal doesn't show the documents arriving immediately. It usually takes a few weeks for colleges to update your portal.

❑ Watch your email for updates!

❑ **Update each college in SCOIR as soon as you receive a result: waitlisted, denied, deferred, accepted, etc.**

❑ After first semester grades are finalized toward the end of January, Mrs. Etheridge will send an updated transcript to the colleges that are in your Applied column (unless you have already been denied admission).

❑ If you are waitlisted, follow the instructions given by the school carefully. If they allow you to strengthen your application, make an appointment with the college counseling office for help.

❑ Keep active in school. Colleges can rescind their offers if grades drop dramatically.

❑ Keep a running total of all scholarships you are offered from all entities. Mrs. Etheridge will ask for this total prior to the Baccalaureate ceremony.

❑ May 1 is the deadline to commit to most schools. By this date, inform every college of your intent to enroll, decline, etc. Colleges cannot require your deposit or commitment to attend before May 1.

❑ **Once you make your decision, mark the college "Enrolling" in SCOIR.** This alerts NRCA to send your final transcript there (and tells us what college sign to order for you).

❑ Continue to look for scholarship opportunities.

❑ If you agreed to submit test scores, send them through ACT or College Board.

NECESSARY WEBSITES

Site Name	Link	Used For
Common App	Common App	Applying to multiple colleges with one application; resources; scholarships
SCOIR	SCOIR	Shared portal between student, parent, NRCA, and the college. Used by student for requesting documents to be sent to colleges, requesting letters of recommendation, scattergrams and college search, applying to colleges, creating a resume and more.
College Board	College Board	PSAT test scores, SAT scheduling, test results and practice resources. Big Future: college, career, and scholarship search and resources.
ACT	ACT	ACT test scores, scheduling additional tests, sending ACT tests
CFNC (College Foundation of NC)	CFNC	Applying to NC Colleges, NC Residency information, scholarships, financial aid and much more.

BUILDING YOUR LIST

KNOW YOURSELF AND YOUR PREFERENCES
The more you understand your own interests, strengths, and weaknesses, the easier (and less expensive) the process will be.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER
- **Location**: How far from home? What type of weather do you prefer?
- **Setting**: Decide if you prefer urban, rural, or suburban. Do you want easy access to shopping, entertainment, and services?
- **Size**: Pay attention to class sizes, number of majors and extracurriculars offered. How much personal attention do you require? Do you prefer a smaller, family atmosphere in which you know a lot of people on campus? Or do you prefer a large public university?
- **Academic Programs:** courses/majors offered; can you easily change majors? Are classes large lectures or small seminars? Are introductory classes taught by faculty or graduate students?
- **Cost**: While you should notice cost and try to determine your cost, you should not rule out schools regarding cost at the early stages of your search.
- **Athletics**: is NCAA Division I important to you? Do you want to participate in intramural sports?
- **Extracurricular activities**: What type of entertainment environment do you prefer? What type of volunteer activities? Is there an active religious community? Ethnic organizations?
- **Public or Private**: Include a mix of both on your initial list.
- **Diversity**: Do you prefer a diverse setting or one in which you will find most people like you? Do you prefer a school with a reputation of being liberal or conservative? Do you want a school with a large international population?

RECOMMENDED COLLEGE AND CAREER SEARCH SITES

Christian College Search

College Foundation of NC

Student Aid.Gov Career Search

College Navigator

College Board Big Future

College Transitions Dataverse

College Data

CollegeXPress

O'Net OnLine

COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE VISITS
NRCA hosts college representatives throughout the fall, and juniors and seniors are encouraged to attend. Some college visits take place online. Students will be invited to sign up to attend college rep visits through SCOIR.

VIRTUAL COLLEGE FAIRS and VIRTUAL TOURS

Many colleges participate in virtual fairs throughout the year. This site shows several options:
https://www.nacacattend.org/fairs

Here are two great sites for virtual college tours:
https://www.thecollegetour.com/
College Search: Virtual College Tours, Virtual Reality Education (youvisit.com)

NARROWING YOUR LIST

VISITS TO CAMPUS

Once you have decided on important criteria, determined your interests, and done some research, you should make it a priority to visit a few schools on your list. Visits will help you narrow down the list and give you a firsthand impression of the students, faculty, staff, facilities, and programs. On a visit, you can learn what the admissions office is looking for in its applicants, gain a feeling for the academic and social atmosphere, see the facilities, talk with students, and get a sense of the surrounding community. Ideally, college visits start in the spring of junior year. Why? Because a college website, catalog, or book can only show you so much. To get a feel for the school, you need to walk around the campus, sit in a class, and visit the dorms. It is also an opportunity to see and experience everyday life on campus. Almost all colleges now offer virtual visits, but, if possible, you should visit your colleges of interest in person.

TIP: Talk to a current student to understand more about what your intended major entails. It is good to know requirements, how the classes are taught (theoretically or applied), what classes are required, etc. The difference in how the major is approached could make a huge difference in your decision making.

WHAT TO INCLUDE ON YOUR LIST

SAFETY SCHOOLS
- Schools you are sure to get into.
- Your GPA and test scores should be well above the middle 50% range of students accepted the previous year to qualify as safety.
- There are no guarantees with college admissions!
- Prep Scholar's Guide to **Safety Schools**

MATCH SCHOOLS
- A school in which you have a pretty good chance of admission
- GPA and test scores fall within the middle 50% range of students accepted the previous year.
- Consider academic and Extracurricular interests

- Consider budget
- Most schools to which you apply should be match schools.
- [Match Schools](#)

REACH SCHOOLS
- A school that is unlikely to offer you admission.
- GPA and test scores fall 25% or below that of the average student accepted the previous year.
- You love the school and can see yourself going there.
- It is usually best not to apply if your scores are too far below the range. Focus your attention on other great schools—there are plenty to choose from!
- [Reach Schools](#)

Read more:
[Likely/Level/Reach: Create the Best College List for You (scoir.com)](#)
[Narrowing Down Your College List Before Applying [Checklist] | Scoir](#)

Lastly, as you make decisions, if you have time and want to understand how the admission process works and would like to broaden your perspective, read the book *Where You Go is Not Who You'll Be* by Frank Bruni.

COURSES, GPA, AND TRANSCRIPTS

Your academic record is the cornerstone of your application. Colleges look for: 1) the level of course difficulty to increase through senior year and 2) grades that are consistently high or that trend upward amid increasingly challenging classes. How many AP courses should you take? Unfortunately, there is no clear answer to this question. Don't get fixated on a number; instead focus on taking as many as you are eligible to take (must have an A in the honors level) and can reasonably handle. Find a balance that works for you!
Admissions officers look at the GPA in context. They realize there are differences in what schools offer and in grading standards, etc. Our school profile, which explains NRCA offerings and details, will be sent to each college where you apply. *We do not send your class rank to colleges.*

STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES

ACT/SAT Scores: Although many colleges remain test-optional, and some are "test blind" (meaning they will not look at scores at all), you should still make it your goal to achieve the highest score possible and submit your scores to colleges that accept them. Studies from 2021-2023 graduates show that those who submitted their scores had a higher rate of admission at many colleges and universities. In addition, test scores are often used to determine scholarships and merit awards. However, if your scores are low, it is great that you have the option of not submitting them at most schools. For an up-to-date list of test optional schools, visit https://fairtest.org/test-optional-list/.

Even though some believe ACT/SAT are phasing out, plan to do well on them. There has to be some way for colleges to compare students in a standardized way, and right now, this is their best option. You should not wait until Junior or Senior year to prepare, but it is not too late if you did. There are plenty of options available such as a book, an online course, an app, a tutor, etc. College Board has partnered with Khan Academy to offer online SAT prep that is personalized for each student based on a diagnostic test or performance on the PSAT. The ACT offers free or low-cost test-prep options through partnership with Kaplan test prep. The program is called "Online Prep Live" and includes live-streaming instruction and official test content from the ACT. Any method will work if you are focused and dedicated to learning the material.

AP Scores: There will be a place on the Common Application to self-report AP scores, but the scores are not required for acceptance. Colleges do not know if you took the AP exam or not since it is not reported unless you choose to report it. Some people choose to report their good AP scores on the application in order to help gain admission to more selective colleges. After being admitted and committing to a college, it is best to send all AP scores, especially if you got a 3 or above, for the chance of receiving college credit. At that point, the scores cannot hurt your chances of admission but can only help you.

The College Board's website has a tool to find colleges who offer credit or placement for AP scores here: https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/getting-credit-placement/search-policies

SUPERSCORING

Many colleges will count your highest scores on the different subject areas of a standardized test regardless of when you obtained those scores. For example, if you took the SAT twice, and received a higher score on math the first time, and on reading and writing the second time, you should send the results from both dates. The college will look at your highest score on both tests. Only sending one score could hurt you. Please note that some public universities, such as the University of California system, do not superscore. Always double check the test policies on each college's website. Another up-to-date summary of policies of many colleges can be found at Compass Prep.

Frequently asked Questions about submitting Test Scores

Q. How should I decide whether to send my scores?

A. As a rule, look for the middle 50% range of scores for students accepted last year. If you fall within that range, it is a good idea to send them. If you fall below, and your scores do not accurately reflect your academic abilities, you probably should not send them. Some colleges require test scores!

Q: Can colleges see my SCOIR account such as my test scores, etc.?

A: No. They can only view the documents sent to them. Please do not delete your test scores out of SCOIR. Those are only used for yourself and NRCA, not for colleges to see.

Q: How do my test scores get sent to colleges?

A: **You** will send those through your ACT or College Board (SAT) account.

Q: Do I have to send test scores along with the application if I plan to send them?

A: Each college may differ. Many schools now ask you to self-report scores on your application but do not need the official scores until you enroll. Check the college's website and follow it closely. Tip: Do not indicate YES that you plan to send in your scores if you are not sure you are going to send them. If you say YES and then don't send in scores, it may significantly delay the process later and cause a lot of frustration for you.

For more information about each test, visit collegeboard.org (SAT) and [ACT.org](ACT.org) (ACT).

DETERMINING YOUR CHANCES OF ACCEPTANCE

While there is no way to know for sure if you will be admitted, as you build your list, it is good to try to get an idea of your possibilities for acceptance.

Your SCOIR account will show a scattergram analysis of GPA and test scores for each school in which **NRCA students** have been accepted. Just click on the college and "analysis" to see the data.

You can see nationwide data to determine your chances for admission at any college by using the College Admissions Calculator at Niche.com. Although it is not always a reliable source, it does give you a pretty good idea of what to expect, and there is plenty to read and learn on this site.

Check each school's middle 50% RANGE of accepted GPAs and test scores. Don't look at the range as a minimum/maximum, but as the middle 50% of those who were accepted. If you fall just below the range, don't automatically eliminate the school. If you fall far below the range, you should consider applying elsewhere. If you fall far above the range, you might consider applying to that school's honor's college. The higher you fall above the range, the better your chances for merit aid at most schools.

For in-depth information about each school's acceptance data, google the name of the school and "Common Data Set." For example, type in "Duke University Common Data Set." For more details, here is a great article: Common Data Set.

Colleges make decisions based on criteria such as majors, demographics, financial considerations, diversity, filling gaps in industries, filling their own gaps, etc. When acceptance and rejection letters start coming in, know that colleges are not telling you no—they are simply making decisions based on their needs to fill their freshman class. If they are looking for a great celloist for their orchestra, it doesn't matter how well you play the violin!

COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

TYPES OF APPLICATION DEADLINES

- **Regular Decision:** Most deadlines are around January 1.
- **Rolling:** Applications are evaluated as they are sent in.
- **Early Action:** Early deadline (usually around November); not binding.
- **Early Decision:** Early deadline (usually around November); binding and you can only apply Early Decision to one school

Article explaining the pros and cons of each: Application Deadlines

APPLICATION METHODS

NRCA SPECIFIC DETAILS FOR APPLICATIONS

School CEEB code: 343-223

High School Address:

7300 Perry Creek Road, Raleigh, NC 27616

Phone Number: 919-573-7900

Graduating Class Size: Varies year to year and will be given at Senior Parent Meeting as well as Senior in class seminar at beginning of school year. This number does not have to be exact, so do not worry if it changes during the school year.

Class Rank Reporting: NRCA does not rank

GPA Scale: 4.0 Weighted

Course Scheduling System: Semesters

The Common Application:

https://www.commonapp.org/.
Almost all colleges accept the Common Application. Students can create an account with Common App at any time and can begin filling out the Common App Tab which asks general questions. Common App will save their

> While other options are available, such as the individual college's website, Common App, SCOIR, and CFNC tend to be the most commonly used application sites among NRCA students.

responses on this tab from year to year, as well as any submitted applications. However, if students begin answering the questions pertaining to a particular college, this information will be lost if done prior to August 1 of their senior year. Once Common App rolls over to the new application year on August 1, the data entered will be saved until the application is submitted.

SCOIR: The Scoir College Network
Several colleges accept applications directly through SCOIR. To use this feature, click on *Apply with SCOIR* on the home page of the site. Applying with SCOIR is very simple, but the one drawback is that not all colleges are available using this method.

CFNC: [College Foundation of North Carolina (CFNC)](#)
The College Foundation of North Carolina has made it simple to apply to colleges within the North Carolina system. Just select *Apply to College* on the site's home page.

HELP WITH FILLING OUT APPLICATIONS

These sites are very helpful to guide you as you fill out your applications and more:
[College admissions | Life skills | Khan Academy](#)
[College Essay Guy | College Application and Essay Help](#)
[CEG Common App Guide](#)
[Common App Guide](#)

COMMON MISTAKES ON THE COMMON APPLICATION

Check out these two excellent articles detailing mistakes to avoid when filling out the common application.
[Common App Mistakes](#)
[Mistakes to Avoid on the Common App](#)

THE COLLEGE ESSAY

Most colleges require students to submit an essay with their application. This essay, otherwise known as a Personal Statement, will be uploaded to the Common Application or any other application method of choice. The same essay will be sent to every college. In addition, most colleges have short "essay" questions called supplemental essays as a part of the application. All essay responses are extremely important to admissions counselors and should not be taken lightly when submitting a quality application.

The topics for the personal statement can be found on the Common App website, along with additional guidance. The purpose of the essay is multifaceted, but mostly the colleges just want to get to know the student better. They want to know more than just grades, numbers, and data. They want to get a clearer picture beyond the application.

We're BIG fans of Ethan Sawyer's approach to personal statements. He's known as College Essay Guy on his blog, podcast, and YouTube channel. Sawyer's essay-writing process decreases stress and helps students discover and share their unique perspectives in their own voices.

Brainstorming Exercises
Essence Objects Exercise - Ethan Sawyer
https://youtu.be/wUMByp0vPf4

Values Exercise - Ethan Sawyer
https://youtu.be/f5DPddm7eVA

Structuring Exercise
Feelings & Needs Exercise - Ethan Sawyer
https://youtu.be/YkDyT1uFl7M

The Best College Essay Book Ever (complete with brainstorming exercises, organizational charts, and model essays)
College Essay Essentials by Ethan Sawyer

SUBMITTING ADDITIONAL REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Each of the following documents are submitted directly from NRCA to the college through SCOIR.

TRANSCRIPTS

- Transcripts are always sent directly from NRCA to the college. This is what makes them official.
- Transcripts that show grades 9-11 as well as the 12th grade class schedule will be sent to each college immediately upon adding that college to "Applied" in SCOIR (beginning after drop/add).
- After first semester grades have been finalized (toward the end of January), updated transcripts will be sent to each college labeled "Applied" in SCOIR if the application has not already been denied.
- At the end of the year, after grades have been finalized, a final transcript will be sent to the college marked "Enrolling." Transcripts will be sent to colleges marked Waitlisted as well upon request.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Rising seniors may start requesting letters in spring of junior year.

First Things to Know

- You need to sign the FERPA waiver and release documents on your profile page in SCOIR. You do not need to submit these documents in Common App.
- Recommendation letters are more important than ever.
- Most colleges require one teacher letter of recommendation. Some require two or three. Some accept as optional but not required.

Choose a teacher...
✓ with whom you have a positive relationship
✓ who can speak highly as to your classroom performance and engagement
✓ who teaches a subject in your area of interest (if possible)

- The same letter will be sent to all colleges that require a letter and you don't need a separate letter for each application.
- Start with one or two teacher requests. More may be added later if needed.
- You can check the college's website, SCOIR and Common App to find out how many teacher letters are required. These may not be accurate until late summer/early August.

Steps to Follow
1. Talk to the teacher in person and politely request a letter.
2. If the teacher agrees, he or she will give you a form to complete. **Forms come from the teacher only!**
3. After completing the form, ask the teacher to sign it.
4. Bring the **signed** form to Mrs. Etheridge (or email it).
5. Request the letter in SCOIR [For Scoir Connected Students: Requesting Letters of Recommendation - User Guide and Support Documentation | Scoir (helpdocs.io)](#)
6. The teacher will receive the request through SCOIR and upload a letter by the due date.
7. The teacher may give you an additional form/survey to help them write the letter.

Understanding Deadlines
- Letters are due to the college approximately 2 weeks after the application is DUE
- You will put the **application** due date on your form, and we ask the teacher to have the letter finished and uploaded by your earliest application due date.
- The letter does not have to be sent at the same time you submit the application.
- Example: If Application is due November 1, the letter will be due around November 15. Even if you submit the application on October 1, you will still give the teacher the due date of NOVEMBER 1.
- Do not push the teacher to complete the letter! If they do not complete by November 1 (most will), you can remind them gently on that day, and they still have about 2 weeks before it is due.

Filling out the Recommenders Section on the Common App
- When filling out the Common App, do NOT include teacher or counselor email address in the recommendations section (It is ok to put names). All recommendations will be done through SCOIR.
- If teachers receive a request through Common App, they will ignore it (same for Counselor Recommendation)

Requesting Other Types of Recommendation Letters
- You do not need to use this process to request a letter from Mrs. Etheridge. There will be a survey for you to complete in SCOIR. By completing that survey, you are requesting a letter.
- If requesting a letter for scholarship or athletics, or anything else besides college, this process does not apply.

SECONDARY SCHOOL REPORT
- Many colleges require this document, but you do not need to send it to Mrs. Etheridge to complete.
- Mrs. Etheridge will complete the Secondary School Report in SCOIR for each student applying to college.
- It contains your personal details as shown in SCOIR (which Is why you need to double-check this information), your GPA, and questions about your academic rigor in comparison to the rest of your class.
- This document will be completed and sent again after first semester grades have been finalized.

SCHOOL PROFILE
- A school profile will be sent to each college to which you apply.
- The school profile can be found on the school website.

MAKING YOUR DECISION

If you have done your homework and applied to a variety of schools, including schools that are certain, you should receive at least one letter of acceptance. If you have multiple school from which to choose, consider these important priorities:

- Prayer and discussion with those who love you most. Is this God's plan for you?
- Cost: what is the ROI (return on investment)? Be able to see how your investment will return to you. I do not recommend leaving college with a mountain of debt! If you are choosing a career that has a starting pay of $50,000, why spend $200,000 on a school? That's not a good ROI!
- Major: If possible, choose a college that will allow you to go directly into your major. If you are not fully sure about your major, be sure your college has a pathway for you or allows a change. 3) Atmosphere: Learn the true nature of the school, including the social atmosphere. Be sure you will feel you fit in.
- Most schools require you to commit by **May 1**. Once you commit, don't forget to follow the process in SCOIR to ensure your final transcript gets sent to your school. These articles will answer a lot of common questions on that topic: What Is College Decision Day? | BestColleges and A Higher Offer: When Should I Wait to Commit to a College? | CollegeVine Blog.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What are the purposes of SCOIR vs. Common App?

Common App
Fill out applications, including essays, but leave recommender and FERPA sections blank

SCOIR
Fill out FERPA Waiver
Check personal information for accuracy
Put colleges in Applying or Applied (after submitting an application)
Request letters of recommendation
Mark college results: accepted, denied, waitlisted, deferred
Early Decision Contracts (ask Mrs. Etheridge for instructions before applying Early Decision)

Q: Do transcripts and letters of recommendation need to be sent at the same time I submit my application?

A: NO. You can apply at any time. The deadline for the documents to arrive is usually a couple of weeks after the DUE DATE of the application. So, if the due date is November 1, and you submit your application August 15, those docs do not need to be there until around November 14. Check your college's portal for deadlines.

Q: Do I change the college to "Applied" before or after I submit the application?

A: After! If done before, the college may receive documents that they cannot attach to any application, and that can result in lost documents and confusion.

Q: What email address should I use on my college applications and in SCOIR?

A: You should use a **personal** email address. It is good to create a new email address to be used only for applying to colleges and check it frequently. If you use your school email address, you may not get some information colleges send to you, and it will not be available after you graduate. Put both email addresses (personal and school) in SCOIR.

Q: Since the transcript sent to colleges in the fall does not include my senior year grades, should I wait until January to apply?

A: If you think that your GPA will increase enough to make a difference, that is an option. It is typically best to turn in your application early though because early applicant acceptance rates are higher at most schools. Colleges will see your current course schedule on your transcript and may factor your *potential* GPA into their decision. For example, if you have a 4.2 GPA after junior year and are taking 5 AP courses senior year, your GPA has a good chance to increase significantly after senior year and the college will notice that. In addition, some colleges recalculate your GPA based on their own scale.

Q: What are other reasons to wait until the regular decision deadline to apply?

A: You may want the time to improve your test scores, improve your applications, nail down your college list, finish your athletic season, etc. There is nothing wrong with applying Regular Decision. Just know that it may put you into a larger pool of applicants, which could potentially affect the acceptance opportunities.

Q: I did Dual Enrollment for at least one class. How do I answer the questions on the Common Application?

A. The name of the college is The College at Southeastern. The courses are 3 credits each.

Only list the classes for which you have already received credit. If you are planning to do dual enrollment senior year, those will show on the transcript from SEBTS you will send later and if you decide to enroll at that college, they will make course-acceptance decisions based on the transcript.

Q: How do I request my transcript from the College at Southeastern?

A. After you have committed to your college, and have completed your dual enrollment classes and received final grades, you can request the transcript to be sent directly to your college by going here: https://www.parchment.com/u/registration/33537318/institution.

Q: What is NC Residency Determination?

A: If you plan to attend any public college in the state of NC, you will want to pay in-state tuition. The NC RDS is a centralized service to determine NC residency so that you do not have to do this with each college. For non-public colleges, NC Residency makes you eligible for state grants. This should be completed before you apply for college. You will enter your certification number on college applications.

Q: The NC Residency form asks for my student ID. Where do I find that?

A: That is for public school students. You do not need to enter an ID number.

Q: What if they determine I'm not a NC resident, but I am?

A: Something was entered incorrectly. The decision can be appealed but can be a bit messy. To help avoid this, I recommend PARENTS completing the RDS themselves or at least doing it along with your student.

Q: Where can I find Scholarships?

A: The best place is through the college. Each college has this information in detail on their website. It is very important to note that scholarship deadlines are often before the regular decision deadline (so you need to apply early) and often before acceptances have been sent out. Sometimes you do not have to do a separate scholarship application but will automatically be considered upon application.

In addition, see the Financial Aid and Scholarship Resources Guide for links to additional recommended sites.

Q: The college portal says they have not received my transcript, and I'm not sure if the counselor sent it.

A: You can check your SCOIR account by clicking on the college from your applied list. Scroll down on the right until you see the list of required documents along with the dates they were sent. It often takes colleges 2-3 weeks to match your documents and update the portal. Usually, the larger the college, the

longer it will take. If a few weeks goes by and you're still getting notifications to send it and the portal shows it hasn't been received, email me just to double check. Then, email or call the college admissions office just to let them know that you are getting these notifications, but it was sent on ___ (date). That way, you can be assured it has arrived.

SCOIR HELP GUIDE

SCOIR connects the NRCA College Counseling office, NRCA families, and the colleges to which you apply. Among other things, students and parents can research and follow colleges, create a resume, and upload important documents and web links to save.

Most importantly, SCOIR provides a portal for the College Counseling office to store important documents such as your recommendation letters, transcripts, and school report. These documents are not viewable to students and parents but are kept safely in your account. When you apply to a college, you will add the school to "Applied" and the documents the college requires will be sent to that school immediately.

GETTING STARTED

1. The College Counseling office will set up your account. You will then receive an invitation to join. Look for it to come to your school email address. Watch this video as a guide: https://vimeo.com/511753289. Accounts can be set up as early as grade 9.
2. Accept the invitation and create your password.
3. Invite a parent to join SCOIR from your profile page.
4. Sign the FERPA waiver on your profile page.
5. **Add a personal email address to your profile and make this personal address primary.** TIP: It is a good idea to create an email address to be used only for college application time. You will be getting a lot of emails!
6. Double check your first/last name, email address, home address, and birthdate for accuracy. Colleges will match this with your application (the details are generated on your school report) and if something is off, it can delay your application.

You will use SCOIR during the application process as noted on the College Application Checklist. It is very important to keep your college list updated throughout the process so there is no delay in your documents being received by the colleges.

QUICK LINKS TO GUIDE YOU THROUGH USING SCOIR
1. Getting Started: https://vimeo.com/642109077
2. Recording Activities and Achievements: https://scoir.helpdocs.io/article/cm1v7w6fgd-changing-email-addresses-or-adding-backup-email
3. Careers: For Students: Discover Careers - User Guide and Support Documentation | Scoir (helpdocs.io) and For Students: Managing Careers in Your Profile - User Guide and Support Documentation | Scoir (helpdocs.io)

4. Create and export a resume: https://scoir.helpdocs.io/article/thrcjtnpj9-create-a-resume
5. Discover Colleges: https://scoir.helpdocs.io/article/51dwlyovnk-for-students-discover-colleges
6. Set your college preferences: https://scoir.helpdocs.io/article/egfwh2kqgz-setting-your-college-preferences
7. Viewing Scattergrams: https://scoir.helpdocs.io/article/vs55bpd5mw-viewing-scattergrams
8. Following a college: https://scoir.helpdocs.io/article/w8ezgqbmu5-for-students-what-following-a-college
9. Using the My Colleges page: https://scoir.helpdocs.io/article/eo07vpqsvt-my-colleges
10. Document Storage: https://scoir.helpdocs.io/article/ny4gbuvb1t-managing-your-document-storage
11. Requesting Teacher Recommendations (also follow NRCA process outlined in Requesting Teacher Recommendation Letters): https://scoir.helpdocs.io/article/8a5m6p2fd4-requesting-teacher-recommendations
12. Requesting a transcript: https://scoir.helpdocs.io/article/u4t9hbb2av-for-students-requesting-a-transcript
13. Ensuring Document Delivery: https://scoir.helpdocs.io/article/13xf3fen2b-checklist-for-ensuring-document-delivery
14. Signing the Early Decision Contract: https://scoir.helpdocs.io/article/meuoe6l9yb-digitally-signing-your-early-decision-contract
15. SCOIR Guide to the Common Application: https://scoir.helpdocs.io/article/xng8iupwmy-completing-the-recommenders-section-of-the-common-application
16. Using the Mobile Application: https://scoir.helpdocs.io/category/m1fvmpv6ik-for-students-the-scoir-mobile-application
17. Applying with SCOIR (you can apply to some colleges directly through SCOIR!): https://scoir.helpdocs.io/category/sggp6m89jz-applying-with-scoir
18. Registering for Visits (such as a college rep visit): https://scoir.helpdocs.io/article/25t0q2lm0x-registering-for-a-visit
19. Updating Outcomes (end of senior year): https://scoir.helpdocs.io/article/0m91nps3qb-updating-outcomes

SCHOLARSHIP AND FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION

OVERVIEWS
[10 Keys to College Funding & Affordability on Vimeo](#)
[(1) CFNC: How to Find Scholarships Webinar (2018) - YouTube](#)

RECOMMENDED SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH SITES

Most scholarship money will come from the college itself in the form of merit or athletic scholarships, but here are some excellent sites to find additional scholarship money.

[North Carolina College Scholarship & Grant Search (cfnc.org)](#)
[8 Scholarships for Wake County (NC) Residents | SmartScholar](#)
[Scholarships - North Carolina Community Foundation (nccommunityfoundation.org)](#)
[Going Merry (NRCA account)](#)
[Search for Scholarships – BigFuture | College Board](#)
[College Debt Free](#)
[studentsscholarships.org](#)
[Find Scholarships for College for FREE | Fastweb](#)

CHRISTIAN COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

[2023–24 Dr. S. L. Sherrill Honorary Scholarship (cedarville.edu)](#)
[Best Christian Colleges and Universities - Christian College Scholarships (christianconnector.com)](#)
[Scholarships and Resources for Christian Students | EduMed.org](#)
[Top 19 Christian Scholarships in June 2023 - Scholarships360](#)
[Christian Vs. Secular Colleges: What's The Difference? (affordablecollegesonline.org)](#)

SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH IN COMMON APP

- Common App has made it easy for applicants to access scholarship opportunities directly through the admissions application. They have partnered with College Board's Big Future Scholarship Search to give the option to connect the student's information with Scholarship Search — saving all that hard work to reuse on the next application!
- You can apply to multiple scholarships without having to re-enter your information each time. Instead, you can reuse your information from one application to another. Fill out one application and simply import it to a Scholarship Search profile to use again next time.
- Scholarship Search works with many scholarship providers, including Scholarship America, Dell Scholars and Phi Theta Kappa. Check out their website for the full list of providers at https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search.
- Once you submit an application in Common App, you will be guided to connect your accounts so we can transfer your Common App application information to your new Scholarship Search profile.
- Connect to Scholarship Search in the Financial Aid Resources tab of your Common App.

- Log in to your Scholarship Search account or register for a new account.
- Give permission for Common App to access and transfer your data to Scholarship Search.
- That's it! You'll be notified when the transfer is complete and will be taken back to your Common App account. Learn more about connecting your Common App with Scholarship Search at appsupport.commonapp.org.

FINANCIAL AID AND STUDENT LOAN RESOURCES

QUICK READS TO GET STARTED
What Is FAFSA and How Does It Work? - Road2College
Do I Have to Fill Out FAFSA? (road2college.com)

FAFSA SITE AND GUIDE
FAFSA® Application | Federal Student Aid
Ultimate FAFSA Resource Guide | SmartScholar
Welcome | EFC Calculator (collegeboard.org)

BEST RESOURCE FOR EVERYTHING!
College Foundation of North Carolina (cfnc.org)

AN EASIER FAFSA FORM
Going Merry - FAFSA®

RESOURCES FOR THE CSS PROFILE (ONLY REQUIRED BY CERTAIN COLLEGES)

Everything to Know About the CSS Profile (road2college.com)
CSS Profile Home – CSS Profile | College Board

FINANCIAL AID TIPS
- **Ask financial aid questions when you visit a college campus.** Ask the school representative if it's possible to visit the institution's financial aid office (if necessary, call ahead to make an appointment).
- **Ask financial aid representatives about cost medians** instead of only looking at a college's published cost.
- **When in doubt, ask a financial aid professional.** Call a financial aid office of any college in your area when you have a question, even if your son or daughter does not plan to attend that institution. Financial aid officers can answer many general questions and are happy to help.
- Some institutions' financial aid and scholarship forms may have deadlines that are PRIOR to the college application form deadline.
- **Review forms and deadlines required by each college.** Creating a chart or spreadsheet can be very helpful for keeping track of the different requirements and dates.

- **Keep all tax records and documents up-to-date** and handy when speaking with a financial aid officer. If your financial situation changes (health issues, loss of job, etc.), alert your financial aid officer immediately.
- **The FAFSA® application includes a feature called the Data Retrieval Tool (DRT)** that allows you to transfer your tax return information to the FAFSA. Information is available on the FAFSA and IRS websites.
- **Look out for the Student Aid Report (SAR)** that confirms you completed your FAFSA. It will provide your eligibility index for federal and state aid. If there are errors or incorrect information on the SAR, you can make corrections online.
- **Compare financial aid packages side by side.** College Board gives advice on how to compare your financial aid award here: [Compare Financial Aid](#).